

JOU4930 - Special Study in Journalism: Careers Beyond the Newsroom

Variable content provides opportunity for study in academic areas of journalism, such as the literature of journalism and other fields within the province of the college.
Prereq: Junior standing.

Class #27458

R | Periods 3-4 (9:35 AM - 11:30 AM)

Online

Instructor **Caitlin Gardner**

Meet Online (100%)

 [Textbooks](#) 

Credits 3

Additional Details

Department Journalism

Add'l Course Fees: \$27.21

Final Exam **4/27/2026 @ 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

EEP Eligible

Class Dates 01/12/2026 - 04/22/2026

JOU 4930 – Off the Record, On the Rise: Journalism Careers Beyond the Newsroom

Spring 2026 • Thursdays, 9:35–11:30 a.m. (Periods 3–4)

Modality: Virtual via Zoom (link in Canvas)

Optional in-person meet-up: Feb. 11, 12 or 13 (timing and exact location TBD)

Instructor: Caitlin Murphy Gardner

Email: murphy@ufl.edu

Office hours: Mondays 10 a.m. – noon, (via Zoom)

Course description

Off the Record, On the Rise shows how journalism fundamentals are the secret sauce behind today's in-demand careers. You'll translate journalism training into career capital by applying research, writing, interviewing, brand storytelling, public speaking and content strategy in dynamic media-adjacent roles that are on the rise.

Course objectives and learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Apply journalism fundamentals in corporate, entrepreneurial and creative settings
- Build a portfolio that showcases strategic writing and brand storytelling
- Sharpen public speaking and presentation skills with professional feedback
- Develop personal branding for resumes, LinkedIn, bios and interviews
- Explore careers in brand strategy, PR, sports, travel, retail, entertainment and tech
- Learn from weekly guest speakers who use journalism skills in innovative roles

Required materials

StrengthFinders suggested as textbook. Readings, videos, worksheets and guest speaker resources provided in Canvas.

Class modality and participation

This course meets live on Zoom. Active participation and engagement is expected. Cameras on unless you have an approved accommodation.

Weekly schedule

Classes run **Jan. 15 – Apr. 16, 2026**. **No class Mar. 19** (Spring Break). Each class features an interactive exercise plus a **guest speaker**.

- **Week 1 — Thu, Jan. 15:** Welcome, syllabus, the future of journalism careers, Strength Finders
- **Week 2 — Thu, Jan. 22:** Translating newsroom skills to Media and Communications strategy
- **Week 3 — Thu, Jan. 29:** Research and writing for brand storytelling
- **Week 4 — Thu, Feb. 5:** Interviewing for insights in business settings
- **Week 5 — Thu, Feb. 12:** Pitching yourself — personal branding 101 and interview prep
- **Feb. 11–13 (one date TBD): Optional in-person meet-up & portfolio reviews** (location TBD)
- **Week 6 — Thu, Feb. 19:** Internal communications and change management
- **Week 7 — Thu, Feb. 26:** Executive presence and presentation skills
- **Week 8 — Thu, Mar. 5:** Visual storytelling and content strategy
- **Week 9 — Thu, Mar. 12:** Crisis communications and calm confidence
- **Spring Break — Thu, Mar. 19: No class**
- **Week 10 — Thu, Mar. 26:** Media training and interview prep for high-stakes communications
- **Week 11 — Thu, Apr. 2:** Building your personal brand portfolio and using AI
- **Week 12 — Thu, Apr. 9:** Entrepreneurship and freelance futures – maximizing the gig economy
- **Week 13 — Thu, Apr. 16:** Final presentations and feedback
- **Final — Monday, April 27, 2026 @ 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

Assignments and grading (500 points total)

- **Attendance and participation (100)** — Engaged presence, in-class exercises, discussion
- **Weekly reflections (100)** — Short written or video reflections tied to speakers and readings
- **Career Project 1: Professional bio + elevator pitch (100)** — One-page bio and a 60-second pitch

- **Career Project 2: Brand strategy case (100)** — Mini campaign or internal comms plan
- **Final Project: Personal brand portfolio (100)** — LinkedIn updates, sample work, one-page brand statement, short “signature story” talk recording, digital portfolio

Grading scale: A 465–500; A- 450–464; B+ 435–449; B 420–434; B- 400–419; C+ 380–399; C 365–379; C- 350–364; D+ 335–349; D 320–334; D- 300–319; E below 299.

Attendance and make-ups

This is a discussion and workshop course. One excused absence allowed with prior notice; unexcused absences deduct **20 points** each from the final grade. Zoom camera on unless you have an approved accommodation.

UF policies and resources

UF Honor code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

DRC: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Course Eval Link: <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>

Student Support Services: <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> and <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>